

278 **SOUL OF MAN UNDER**
SOCIALISM

things, who know, - that it is wrong to do so,
and only do it
because the unhealthy conditions under which
their occupation

atisfying to the gross popular
appetite
as possible. It is a very degrading position for any
body of
educated men to be placed in, and I have no
doubt that most
of them feel it acutely.
However, let us leave what is really a very sordid
side of the
subject and return to the question of popular
control in the matter
if Art/ by which I mean Public Opinion dictating
to the artist
the form which he is to use, the mode in which he
is to use it,
and the materials with which he is to work. I
have pointed
out that the arts which had escaped best in
England are the
arts in which the public have not been interested.
They are,
however, interested in the drama, and as a
certain advance
has been made in the drama within the last ten or
fifteen years,
it is important to point out that this advance is
entirely due to
a few individual artists refusing to accept the
popular want of
taste as their standard, and refusing to regard
Art as a mere
matter of demand and supply. With his marvellous
and vivid
personality, with a style that has really a true
colour-element
in it, with his extraordinary power, not over
mere mimicry
but over imaginative and intellectual creation,
Mr. Irving, had
his sole object been to give the public what they
wanted, could
have produced the commonest plays in the
commonest manner,
and made as much success and money as a man
could possibly
desire. But his object was not that. His object
was to realize
his own perfection as an artist., under certain
conditions and in
certain forms of Art. At first he appealed to the
few: now he
has educated the many. He has created in the
public both
taste and temperament. The public appreciate
his artistic
success immensely. I often wonder, however,
whether the
public understand that that success is entirely
due to the fact
that he did not accept their standard, but
realized his own.
With their standard the Lyceum would have been
a sort of
second-rate booth, as some of the popular
theatres in London
are at present. Whether they understand it or
not, the fact
however remains, that taste and temperament
have, to a certain
extent, been created in the public, and that the
public is capable
of developing these qualities. The problem then
is, why do
not the public become more civilized ? They have
the capacity.

What stops them?